

AMENDED IN ASSEMBLY MARCH 31, 2009

CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE—2009—10 REGULAR SESSION

ASSEMBLY BILL

No. 1177

**Introduced by Assembly Members Fong and Hill
(Coauthor: Assembly Member Jones)**

February 27, 2009

An act to add Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8260) to Division 8 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, relating to homelessness.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AB 1177, as amended, Fong. Homelessness: Interagency Council on Homelessness.

Under existing law, several agencies have prescribed responsibilities relating to homeless persons.

~~This bill would declare the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would create the Interagency Council on Homelessness for the purposes of reducing the duplication of efforts and the costs of homelessness and redirecting resources to more effective approaches, developing a more integrated system, and eliminating fragmentation.~~

This bill would, among other things, create the California Interagency Council on Homelessness, composed of specified members, to construct cross-agency and community cooperation in responding to homelessness, use a more efficient and supportive method in implementing evidence-based approaches to address homelessness, and, to the extent possible, plan to end homelessness in the state.

Vote: majority. Appropriation: no. Fiscal committee: ~~no~~-yes.
State-mandated local program: no.

The people of the State of California do enact as follows:

1 *SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the*
2 *following:*

3 *(a) California has the highest rate of homelessness and the*
4 *highest ratio of homeless people per resident, with 360,000 people*
5 *sleeping on the streets or in shelters on any given night.*

6 *(b) Homelessness is traumatic for those who suffer it, often*
7 *leading to separated families, exacerbation of health conditions,*
8 *a rise in avoidable emergency room use, social and academic*
9 *delays among children, and greater likelihood of incarceration.*

10 *(c) Many people who lack permanent shelter and the ability to*
11 *access regular support ricochet through separate and expensive*
12 *public systems: overburdened corrections systems, overcrowded*
13 *hospital emergency rooms, mental health programs, substance*
14 *abuse treatment and detox facilities, shelters, and emergency*
15 *housing. As a result, people experiencing chronic homelessness*
16 *use a disproportionate share of state and local services.*

17 *(d) Innovative approaches across the nation and within*
18 *California show promise for reducing homelessness and the*
19 *resulting impact on state services.*

20 *(e) Changing the system and reducing homelessness requires*
21 *coordination and cooperation among federal, state, and local*
22 *governments, as well as private sector organizations.*

23 *(f) Creation of a statewide coordinating council is an important*
24 *and effective tool in supporting initiatives to end homelessness in*
25 *California.*

26 *(g) Creation of a statewide coordinating council would stem*
27 *avoidable costs of maintaining homelessness and would, therefore,*
28 *result in reducing avoidable costs to multiple programs.*

29 *(h) Homelessness affects multiple systems in California,*
30 *including housing, mental health and substance abuse, education,*
31 *corrections, foster care, health care, and veterans services. Though*
32 *most other states have adopted a plan to end homelessness because*
33 *of the cost impact on all of these systems, California has not crafted*
34 *a similar plan. A codified, structured interagency council on*
35 *homelessness would help fill this gap.*

36 *(i) In November 2005, Governor Schwarzenegger created the*
37 *Governor's Homeless Initiative, which included plans to form an*
38 *interagency coordinating council to reduce homelessness. The*

Business, Transportation and Housing Agency's 2005–10 Consolidated Plan further indicates the importance of an interagency council on homelessness. Despite these intentions, a council has not met regularly or publicly since the Governor adopted his Homeless Initiative.

(j) California must give priority to developing consolidated, coordinated, and cooperative approaches to issues of homelessness.

(k) Working within current costs, a revitalized Interagency Council on Homelessness will reduce duplication of efforts and the costs of homelessness and will redirect resources to more effective approaches, developing a more integrated system and eliminating fragmentation.

SEC. 2. Chapter 7 (commencing with Section 8260) is added to Division 8 of the Welfare and Institutions Code, to read:

*CHAPTER 7. CALIFORNIA INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON
HOMELESSNESS*

8260. For purposes of this chapter, the following definitions shall apply:

(a) "At risk of homelessness" means a history of homelessness or an absence of a permanent address over the last 12 months and an income of 30 percent or below the area median income.

(b) "Council" means the California Interagency Council on Homelessness.

(c) "Homelessness" means a condition where a person lacks a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence or who has a primary nighttime residence that is either a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations or a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for a human being. Homelessness also applies to a person who is exiting an institutional setting and is at risk of homelessness, or is living in transitional or temporary housing.

(d) "Stakeholder organization" means a nonprofit or faith-based organization whose primary mission is to prevent or end homelessness, to provide services or health care to people who are homeless, or to create housing for people who are homeless.

1 8261. (a) *There is hereby created in state government the*
2 *California Interagency Council on Homelessness with a mission*
3 *to construct cross-agency and community cooperation in*
4 *responding to homelessness, to use a more efficient and supportive*
5 *method in implementing evidence-based approaches to address*
6 *homelessness, and, to the extent possible, plan to end homelessness*
7 *in the state.*

8 (b) *Membership of the council shall include all of the following:*

9 (1) *At least one representative with decisionmaking authority*
10 *from each of the following:*

11 (A) *The State Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs.*

12 (B) *The Department of Community Services and Development.*

13 (C) *The Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.*

14 (D) *The State Department of Education.*

15 (E) *The State Department of Health Care Services.*

16 (F) *The Department of Housing and Community Development.*

17 (G) *The California Housing Finance Agency.*

18 (H) *The State Department of Mental Health.*

19 (I) *The State Department of Social Services.*

20 (J) *The Department of Veterans Affairs.*

21 (2) *At least one representative of the Governor's office.*

22 (3) *Two members of the Senate, to be appointed by the President*
23 *pro Tempore of the Senate, or their designees.*

24 (4) *Two members of the Assembly, to be appointed by the*
25 *Speaker of the Assembly, or their designees.*

26 (5) *Two members of the philanthropic community from*
27 *organizations that are active in homelessness issues, to be*
28 *appointed by the Governor.*

29 (6) *Representatives of at least four stakeholder organizations,*
30 *to be appointed by the Governor.*

31 (7) *At least two consumer representatives, to be appointed by*
32 *the Governor.*

33 (c) *The Governor shall appoint a chairperson and*
34 *vice-chairperson from among the members of the council. Within*
35 *current costs, the council may establish working groups, task*
36 *forces, or other structures from within its membership or with*
37 *outside members to assist it in its work. Working groups, task*
38 *forces, or other structures established by the council shall*
39 *determine their own meeting schedules.*

40 (d) *All members of the council shall serve without compensation.*

1 8262. *The council shall do all of the following:*

2 (a) *Hold public meetings at least once every quarter.*

3 (b) *Act as the lead for coordinating and planning the state's*
4 *response to homelessness.*

5 (c) *Streamline the administration of programs across agencies*
6 *and jurisdictions to reduce duplication, consolidate availability*
7 *of services, and ease clients' access to services.*

8 (d) *Streamline funding of homelessness programs to leverage*
9 *existing resources more effectively.*

10 (e) *Solicit input and suggestions from stakeholders, the business*
11 *community, the concerned public, and other governmental agencies*
12 *on the most effective strategies to address homelessness.*

13 (f) *Identify best practices from other states in combating*
14 *homelessness.*

15 (g) *Create a plan for council actions by the end of the first year*
16 *after the initial meeting, with annual review, to implement*
17 *recommendations for policy, regulatory, and resource changes*
18 *needed to accomplish objectives, as well as each agency's*
19 *responsibilities on the council.*

20 (h) *Within current costs, or provided funding is available for*
21 *related costs, publish a plan to reduce or end homelessness within*
22 *three years.*

23 (i) *Collaborate on planning for discharge of people likely to*
24 *become homeless after leaving institutions, including, but not*
25 *limited to, prisons, crisis health care facilities, and foster care.*

26 (j) *Gather needs assessments from local jurisdictions that are*
27 *currently required to submit needs assessments to a state agency,*
28 *including, but not limited to, city housing elements and community*
29 *continuation of care.*

30 (k) *Not later than January 1, 2015, create a centralized database*
31 *on homelessness, provided federal funds are available.*

32 (l) *Not later than January 1, 2017, assist in the coordination of*
33 *a statewide continuum of care, provided funds are available.*

34 (m) *Identify private and public funding partnerships.*

35 8263. *The council shall operate within the current budget of*
36 *each department and agency represented. Each department and*
37 *agency shall cooperate with the council and furnish it with*
38 *information and assistance that is necessary or useful to further*
39 *the purposes of this chapter.*

1 ~~SECTION 1. The Legislature finds and declares all of the~~
2 ~~following:~~

3 ~~(a) The economic crisis is causing higher rates of homelessness;~~
4 ~~particularly among families with children, the fastest-growing~~
5 ~~segment of people experiencing homelessness.~~

6 ~~(b) Before the economic crisis, California faced the largest~~
7 ~~homeless population and the largest ratio of homeless persons per~~
8 ~~resident in the nation.~~

9 ~~(c) There are several costs to the state to manage homelessness;~~
10 ~~including, but not limited to, incarceration, shelters, medical costs,~~
11 ~~and foster care.~~

12 ~~(d) At least nine state agencies are affected by homelessness,~~
13 ~~resulting in a fragmented approach. These agencies are the~~
14 ~~Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, the State Department~~
15 ~~of Health Care Services, the State Department of Mental Health,~~
16 ~~the State Department of Social Services, the Department of~~
17 ~~Housing and Community Development, the State Department of~~
18 ~~Education, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the State~~
19 ~~Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, and the California~~
20 ~~Housing Finance Agency.~~

21 ~~SEC. 2. It is the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation~~
22 ~~that would create the Interagency Council on Homelessness for~~
23 ~~the purposes of reducing the duplication of efforts and the costs~~
24 ~~of homelessness and redirecting resources to more effective~~
25 ~~approaches, developing a more integrated system, and eliminating~~
26 ~~fragmentation.~~